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THE

CAPITOL AND WASHINGTON

AT THE

BEGINNING OF THE PRESENT CENTURY.

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BY

JOHN H. B. LATROBE,

BEFORE THE

AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS,

IN

WASHINGTON, D. C.

NOVEMBER 16TH, 1881.

BALTIMORE: . . . STEAM PRESS OF WM. K. BOYLE.

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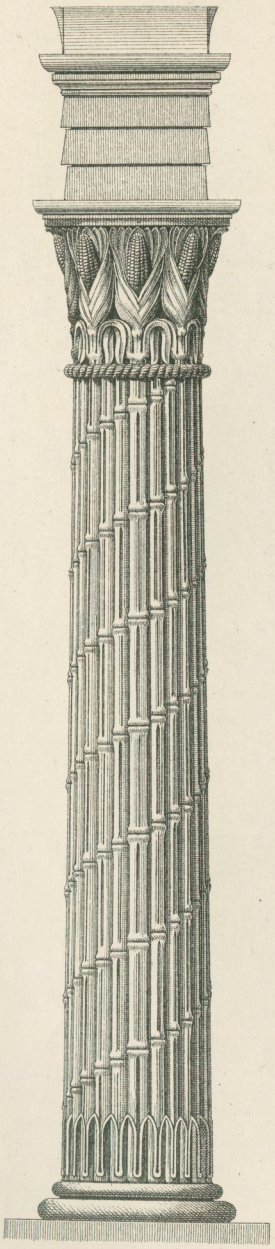

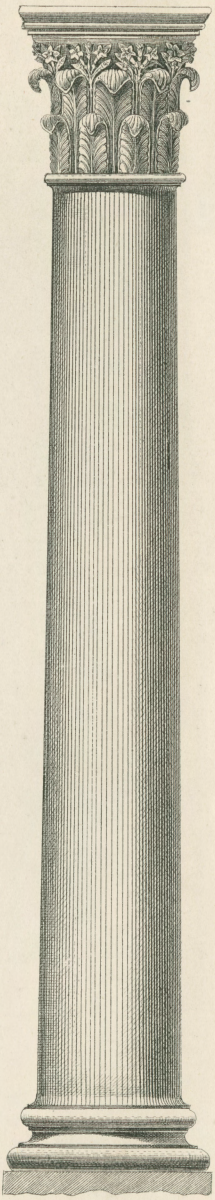

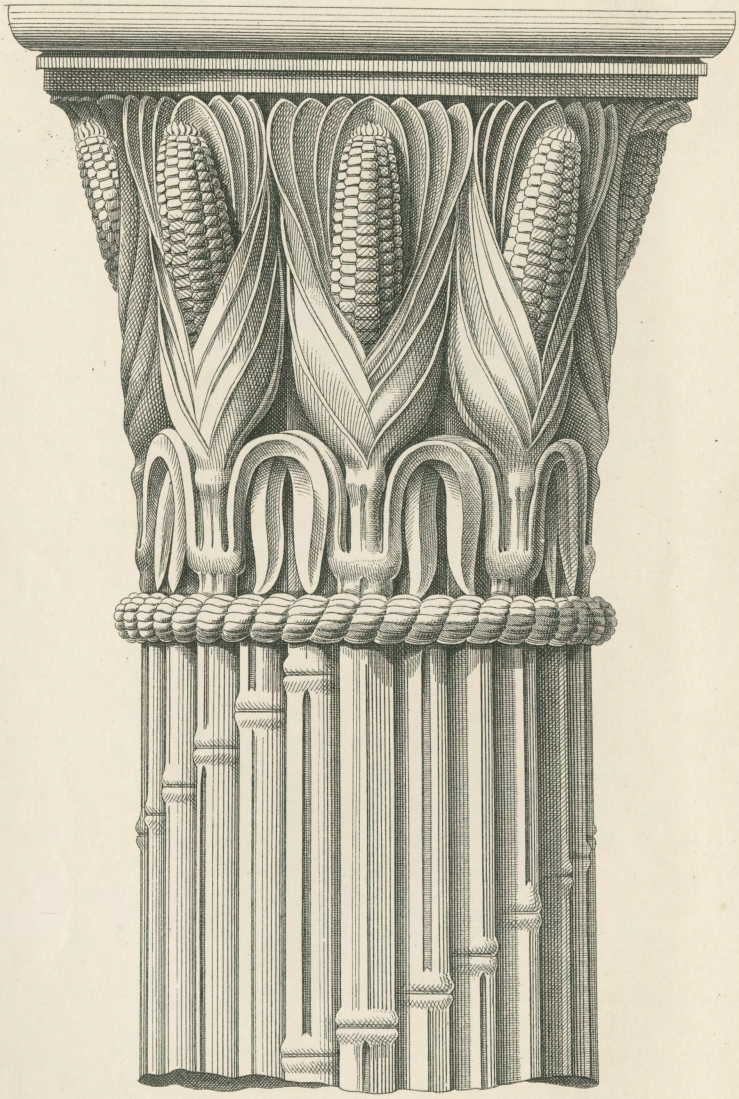

MEMBERS OF THE AMERICAN
INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS:

THE subject of the address that I have been asked by your distinguished president to deliver, as his alternate, is "Washington and the Capitol at the beginning of the present Century."

Although not an Architect myself, I am, nevertheless, the son of an Architect; and inasmuch as we are here under the shadow almost of the building with which my father's name is more especially identified, I have thought that you would—pardoning the egotism which is more or less necessarily involved—bear with me if I made the Capitol the main topic of my discourse.

The permanent seat of the Government of the United States was selected only after much contention and bitter debate. The subject first came up in the House of Representatives, August 27th, 1789, on a motion, "That a permanent residence ought to be fixed for the General Government of the United States, at some convenient place as near the centre of wealth, population and extent of territory as may be consistent with convenience to the navigation of the Atlantic Ocean, and have due regard to the particular situation of the Western Country." It was in the discussion of this motion, that Fisher Ames doubted "whether the Government would stand the shock of a selection which involved as many passions as the human heart could display." On the 3rd September the discussion was renewed; and the merits of the several sites suggested for the Seat of Government being under discussion, and among others, the Potomac—which had been strongly urged by Mr. Madison as being "more certain and convenient than any other, while the water-way to the sea was wholly unobstructed"—Mr. Wadsworth of Connecticut, said "that he did not dare to go to the Potomac. He feared the whole of New England would consider the Union dissolved." There was much more uttered in

the same style. The question was taken at last on a resolution, agreed to in the House of Representatives by a vote of twenty-eight yeas to twenty-six nays, authorizing the President to appoint three Commissioners to report the most eligible situation on the Susquehanna, in Pennsylvania. To this, however, the Senate adopted an amendment, by a vote of ten yeas to seven nays, fixing upon Germantown as the permanent seat. In this amendment, the House concurred by a vote of thirty-one yeas to twenty-four nays; notwithstanding Mr. Madison asked for delay, "that the eye of America should be indulged with an opportunity of viewing it before it made it their fixed abode." In accepting the Senate's amendment, however, the House added a proviso, "continuing the laws of Pennsylvania in force within the ceded district until Congress should otherwise provide." This, of course, sent the bill back to the Senate for concurrence: but it being within twenty-four hours of the close of the session, a motion was carried to postpone the further consideration of the bill to the next session of Congress. At the session of 1790, the same angry debates were resumed; but at last, on the 16th of July, an Act was passed authorizing the President to appoint commissioners to survey, under his direction, a district of territory, not exceeding ten miles square, at some place on the River Potomac, between the mouths of the Eastern Branch and Conococheague. The President, "with that consummate judgment which distinguished his career, fixed upon just the one spot in the entire range of territory prescribed by Congress, which commanded the three-fold advantages of unfailing tide-water navigation, convenient access to Baltimore and the other great cities mentioned, and superb natural sites alike for public buildings, and the varied wants of a populous city;" and, himself an old surveyor, described, by metes and bounds, the district, which by his proclamation, dated Georgetown, March 30th, 1791, became the permanent seat of the Government of the United States. Mr. Jefferson, in his Ana, says that the selection was a compromise brought about by Hamilton, by which he secured a majority for the assumption by Congress of the debts of the several States.*

*For a full and interesting account of the debates in the above connection, see "The Founding of Washington," an address delivered by Ainsworth R. Spofford, Fund publication No. 17, of the Maryland Historical Society.

To prepare the plan of the future city, the commissioners appointed Charles Pierre L'Enfant to be their engineer. He had come to America as an officer in the French line in 1777, was wounded in the assault of Savannah by D'Estaing, was taken prisoner, was exchanged in 1782, became Major of Engineers in 1783, was sent to France by the Society of the Cincinnati to arrange for the engraving of its gold badge, and, being accomplished in many ways, was employed on his return by Robert Morris, to design a palatial residence in Philadelphia, which, it is reported, never arose much above the cellar story. In 1789, we find him preparing the Old City Hall in Wall Street, New York, for occupation by Congress after the adoption of the Constitution.

Brought into notice in this way, L'Enfant seemed to be the proper person to prepare the plan for the new city; and at once proceeded, with the assistance of Andrew Ellicott and others, to execute the work. It was Ellicott who established the meridian of Washington, the intersection of which by an east and west line is marked by the Capitol.

L'Enfant appears to have had *carte blanche* in the matter; nor had Peter the Great more control in this regard, when he laid out, on the marshes of the Neva, the grand avenues of the Russian Capital, than the French major of engineers—who in some respects imitated him—when he traced, on the swampy grounds of the Tiber, the plan of a city, which already, in the stately magnificence of its public buildings, promises to equal, if not to surpass, the city of the Czar.

It might be inferred from a letter of General Washington, dated April 30, 1791, that he intended the seat of Government to be called "The Federal City." But in the instructions given by the commissioners to L'Enfant, they say: "We have agreed that the Federal District shall be called 'the Territory of Columbia,'" and the Federal city "the city of Washington;" and this was made the title of the map. When it was finished, and the public sales were about to begin, from the proceeds of which the public buildings were to be erected, L'Enfant refused to submit his work to public inspection; his excuse being that certain neighborhoods would be seized by speculators, and shanties run up where he designed palaces to be constructed. Such not being General Washington's view of the matter, the

commissioners took possession of the map, and L'Enfant's further services were dispensed with. In 1812, he was employed by Mr. Madison to plan a fort on the Potomac below Washington; and later, Mr. Monroe offered him a professorship at West Point, which he did not accept. There are those yet living who remember seeing him, in his somewhat peculiar dress, wandering, an aged man, in the streets of Washington, as late as 1825. In this year he died, taking his place in the ranks of the vast host of the forgotten *bene meritos*. He lies buried on the Digges' farm, close by his last work for the United States—the fort on the Potomac.*

The Act of 16 July, 1790, had directed the commissioners to provide, prior to December 1, 1800, suitable buildings for the accommodation of Congress, on plans to be approved by the President; and in March, 1792, a premium was offered of $500, or a gold medal, by advertisement.

"This mode of obtaining designs for public buildings," says one—the truth of whose words must commend itself to my professional hearers—"is sure to defeat its own end. It brings into competition those who think they have knowledge in an art which they have never had an opportunity to learn or practice—those who enticed by the reward, think that personal influence will procure it for them—those who know nothing of design but its execution; and it keeps out of the competition all who have too much self-respect to run the race of preference with such motley companions; and, especially, all regularly educated professional men, who understand their business too well not to know that a picture is not a design, and that to form and elaborate a plan of a public work so that it shall be capable of being executed from the papers they present, requires so much time, labor and clerkship, that no reward such as is usually offered can compensate."†

The result of the advertisement for plans for the Capitol and President's house verified these remarks; and inasmuch as pains had been taken to publish it in all the principal towns and

*The facts stated in the text in regard to Major L'Enfant, are taken from an interesting history of him, prepared with much care, in the New York Tribune of September 3d, 1881.

†Letter from B. H. Latrobe, in 1805, to members of Congress, in the Library of the Maryland Historical Society.

cities, the architectural ability of the United States may be reasonably supposed to have been brought to light, as it existed in the last decade of the eighteenth century.

I have had access to some eight or ten of the designs offered in competition. All of them are bad, very bad indeed—the greater part below contempt, and some bordering upon the ludicrous. In one, a triple window has a cornice broken by an arch over the central opening, on either side of which is a man rampant, with one foot on the arch and the other on the level of the cornice, as though the two men proposed to do battle over the keystone. This competitor evidently thought himself strong in statuary, and placed an array of figures on the parapet of the President's house of the most ridiculous description. Another competitor exhausted himself on the face of a clock, where the twelve letters in the words United States are used to mark the hours. The spread-eagle seems to have been regarded as an essential in some of the designs; and the bird exhibits itself on pediments and in weathercocks in most extraordinary shapes. One of these national birds is carefully drawn with the wings of a penguin and a breast-plate of thirteen circles, ingeniously arranged. Another competitor has devoted the greater part of his labor to portraying the separate chairs of Senators and Representatives, and indicating the color of the leather, or other material, for the seats. Another ventures upon perspective, and makes a sad affair of it. Take them all in all, they are indeed a sorry lot.

Among the competitors, however, were William Thornton and James Hoban. To the first, was awarded the premium for the Capitol, while the other obtained that for the President's house.

In an address delivered at the Tenth Annual Convention of the Institute, Thornton is spoken of as "an English amateur, who had come from the West Indies, was a thorough man of the world, founded a race-course and sported blooded horses."* Thornton was more than this, however: he was a man of genius and a philanthropist, who offered to take a colony of negroes from the United States and establish it on the coast of Africa,

*Address of Adolph Cluss, Esq., before the American Institute of Architects, October 12, 1877.

anticipating the work of the American Colonization Society. But he was not an architect—claiming indeed no more acquaintance with architecture than he had acquired in two weeks study in the Philadelphia library. Incapable of appreciating the difficulties of the profession, self-reliant, impulsive and impatient, it is not to be wondered that he quarreled with those who undertook to execute his suggestions—for his plans amounted to little more. The address just referred to says, further, that Thornton "succeeded in having the plans of Stephen L. Hallet, a French Architect, who had been one of the competitors, superseded by his own, and in having the premium awarded to himself." This does not appear to have been the opinion of Mr. Jefferson, who was Secretary of State at the time, and greatly interested in the subject. In a letter addressed by him to Mr. Latrobe, July 28th, 1804, he says, referring to the plans in competition: "Many were sent in. A council was held by General Washington and the Board of Commissioners, and after a very mature examination, two were preferred and the premiums given to their authors, Dr. Thornton and Hobens." (*sic.*)*

I have Thornton's drawings. On the margin of one is written, in Mr. Latrobe's hand: "Given to me by George Blagden, as the only existing drawing of the Capitol, May 3, 1803." On another: "Received by B. H. Latrobe from the President U. S., January 12, 1805;" on the third, "Plan of the Capitol received from Dr. Thornton, April, 1806." All correspond, and represent, no doubt, the plan approved by General Washington. The address already mentioned, says, that "Dr. Thornton had, it appears, carried the day by a neatly washed elevation; and when his ground plans were corrected according to sound principles of construction, they looked so remarkably like Hallet's, that this gentleman formally protested against the award, claimed the original invention, and begged leave to present proof of it." I have in my possession what purports to be Hallet's original design, obtained by Mr. Latrobe from Mr. James Greenleaf, a prominent person in Washington at the time, who appears to have received it from Hallet himself. There is the same idea of a central building, with wings for the Senate and House of

*Jefferson's Correspondence, vol. iv, p. 535.

Representatives, respectively, that characterizes Thornton's plan; although where Thornton has a central rotunda, with an interior colonnade, Hallet has an enormous square hall, with colonnades on the four sides: and there are other differences. The address again says, that the original designs of Hallet were restored to the archives of the Capitol in 1871, "whereby the memory of Hallet stands vindicated." That he was an accomplished Architect, seems to have been admitted on all hands; nor does the fact that he was employed to carry out Thornton's plan absolutely militate against his claim that this was in fact his own. Circumstances may have left him no alternative. That Thornton and the commissioners quarreled with him is very certain; and about July, 1794, he was discharged. Hallet's successor was George Hatfield, an English Architect of talent, skill and experience—a refined and estimable gentleman, who, among other edifices, designed the City Hall in Washington. During four years of strife with Thornton and the commissioners, he kept his place; but was, at last, driven away; and in May, 1798, ceased to be employed at the Capitol.

When Hatfield went down, like Hallet, before Thornton, Hoban, the Architect of the President's house, took charge, with no better fortune than his predecessors. Thornton was still impracticable, and the commissioners offensive. He kept his place, however, until 1802, when the executive authority was transferred to a commissioner; and in 1803, Mr. Jefferson, then President, appointed B. Henry Latrobe as "Surveyor of the public buildings," which was the title of the office of Architect.

Although for the purposes of the present narrative, it would suffice to state the simple fact of Mr. Latrobe's appointment, yet the letters of Mr. Jefferson conferring it have an interest that leads me to quote them from the originals in my possession.

WASHINGTON, *March* 6, 1803.

SIR —Congress have appropriated a sum of money, ($50,000) to be applied to the public buildings under my direction. This falls, of course, under the immediate business of the Superin-

tendent, Mr. Munroe, whose office is substituted for that of the Board of Commissioners. The former post of Surveyor of the public buildings, which Mr. Hoban held till the dissolution of the board, (at $1700 a year,) will be revived. If you choose to accept it, you will be appointed to it, and would be expected to come on by the 1st of April; indeed, if you could make a flying trip here to set contractors at work immediately in raising freestone, it would be extremely important, because it is now late to have to engage laborers, and the quantity of freestone which can be raised, delivered and cut in the season, is the only thing that will limit the extent of our operations this year. I set out to-morrow for Monticello, and shall be absent three weeks, but shall be glad to receive there your answer to this. Accept my friendly salutations and regards.

TH. JEFFERSON.

P. S.—On the raising of the freestone be pleased to consult Col. D. C. Brent, who can give you better information and advice on the subject than any other person whatever, having been much concerned in the business himself.

WASHINGTON, *March* 6, 1803.

Dear Sir—The letter in which this is enclosed being a public one, and to be produced whenever necessary as a voucher, I have thought it would be useful to add a word in one of a private and friendly nature. From the sum of $50,000 we shall take between $5,000 and $10,000 for covering the north wing of the Capitol and the President's house. The residue of $40,000 to $45,000 will be employed in building the south wing, as far as it will go. I think it will raise the external walls to the uppermost window-sills, being those of the *entresols*, and I have no doubt Congress at their next session will give another $50,000, which will complete that wing, inside and out, in the year 1804. Before that period, the repairs of their frigates will become so threatening that I have no doubt they will come into the proposition of the dry dock to rescue themselves from heavier calls. I mention these things to show you the probability of a pretty steady employment of a person of your character here, though the present job has the appearance of being for the present season only—say, of eight or nine months—

and that your being in possession of the post will put all other competitors out of the question. Should you think proper to undertake it, if you come here on a flying trip, as suggested in my other letter, you can advise with Mr. Munroe, who will set into motion whatever you may desire; and if you can be here finally the first week in April you will find me here, and everything may be put under full sail for the season. Accept my best wishes and respects.

TH. JEFFERSON.

P. S.—I think a great quantity of sheet-iron will be wanting.

Mr. Latrobe came accordingly. His salary was $1700, while visiting Washington occasionally only; but was increased to $3500 when he made his permanent residence there. The "eight or nine months," as we will see, extended to as many years.

Born in England, though of American descent on his mother's side, Mr. Latrobe was theoretically and practically an architect, having studied in the office of Cockrell, eminent in London in the profession, and having had a large experience in the erection of buildings in England. Besides this, he was a person of very remarkable and various accomplishments, versed in many languages, an adept in natural science, an admirable draftsman, imbued with the spirit of his profession and devoted to it—an engineer, too, as well as an architect. Coming to America in 1796, he built the Virginia penitentiary, at Richmond, and many private mansions; and removing to Philadelphia in 1798, designed the Bank of Pennsylvania and constructed the old water-works, that, in 1800, and long afterwards, supplied Philadelphia with water. While in Virginia, he became acquainted with Mr. Jefferson, who, when the work on the public buildings was resumed, placed them, as we have seen, under his charge.*

* B. Henry Latrobe was descended from the Boneval Family of France, a younger branch of which, John Henry Boneval de la Trobe, emigrated to Holland after the revocation of the Edict of Nantz, entered the military service of the Prince of Orange, went with him to England, was severely wounded at the battle of the Boyne, married and settled in Waterford, and died in Dublin at the age of 96. His son Benjamin La Trobe, born April 19, 1728, joined the Moravian Church, was married, in 1766, to Anna Margaretta Antes of Pennsylvania, who had been sent to England by her Moravian parents to be educated at a school of "The United Brethren," where Mr. Latrobe met and married her. They had three sons, Christian Ignatius, prominent in the Moravian Church, distinguished for his com-

The Capitol at this time was in the charge of Mr. George Blagden, who had been the principal stonemason under Hallet, Hatfield and Hoban, and to whose ability and personal worth and integrity Mr. Latrobe's correspondence bears ample testimony.

The north wing had been so far completed in 1800 as to be occupied by the Senate, the courts and the library of Congress. The south wing was little more than an enclosure, some twenty feet in height, within which was an oval brick building, occupied by the House of Representatives, and called by the public "the Oven." Of this, Mr. Latrobe reported, in 1804, that "it would have been dangerous to have assembled within it, had its walls not been strongly supported by shores from without." When the oven was pulled down, that the construction of the south wing might go on, the House of Representatives was transferred to the library in the north wing, the books being removed to an

positions in sacred music, and known to the literary world by his travels in Africa; Benjamin Henry, the subject of this notice, and Frederick, a physician, who settled at Dorpat, in Livonia. In the history of Manchester, there is an admirable engraving by Bromly of the Rev. Benjamin La Trobe, from a painting by Astley, a distinguished artist, and a memoir showing the high position he held in the regard of his cotemporaries.

B. Henry Latrobe was born May 1st, 1764, in Yorkshire, England, where his education was carefully attended to by his father; and at 12 years of age was sent to a Moravian Seminary in Saxony, where he remained until prepared to enter the University of Leipsic, where he completed his education. In 1785, he left Leipsic; and with some college friends, in a spirit of adventure and frolic, entered the Prussian Army, as a cornet of Huzzars; was twice in severe actions, in the last of which he was badly wounded; resigned his commission, and after some time passed in traveling, returned to England in 1786.

On the death of his father, which happened soon after, he entered the office of Mr. Cockerill, as stated in the text, and adopted the profession of an Architect.

Here his probation was brief. His acquirements on all subjects, extraordinary for his years, gave him great advantages, and on leaving Mr. Cockerill in 1788, he soon found himself fully occupied, and was made, in the following year, Surveyor of the Public Offices and Architect and Engineer of the City of London.

In 1790, Mr. Latrobe married Miss Lydia Sellon, sister of the well-known law-writer of that name; and by her had two children, a son and a daughter. In 1793, his wife died; and, two years afterwards, influenced largely by his political and republican views, and by the same spirit that had carried him into the Prussian Army, he came to America, regardless of the prospect of lucrative employment in England, and declining a Surveyorship of the Crown, offered him by Lord Barham, at a salary of £1000 a year. Embarking at London on the 25th November, 1795, he landed in Norfolk on the 20th March, 1796. To continue the account of his life would be to make this notice a biography—to do justice to which, a volume would be necessary. Sufficient has been said to supply what seems to be wanting in the brief reference in the text.

Mr. Latrobe died September 3rd, 1820, in New Orleans, where, at the time of his death, he was engaged in erecting works for supplying the city with water.

adjacent committee-room. Here, it was so uncomfortable that an amendment actually passed the Senate to transfer Congress to the other end of Pennsylvania avenue, and establish it permanently in the presidential mansion.

The appointment of Mr. Latrobe was the signal for battle with Thornton; nor was it long before the strife waxed warm.

Influenced by the *prestige* of General Washington's approval, Mr. Jefferson was desirous that there should be as few departures as possible from Dr. Thornton's plan; and, with a view to the establishment of friendly relations, Mr. Latrobe called upon its author. The result of the visit is best explained by the following letter, dated February 27, 1804:

"*To the President of the United States:*

"*Dear Sir*—I judged very ill in going to Dr. Thornton. In a few peremptory words, he in fact told me that no difficulties existed in his plan but such as were made by those who were too ignorant to remove them; and though these were not exactly his words, his expressions, his tones, his manner and his absolute refusal to discuss the subject, spoke his meaning more strongly and offensively than I have expressed."

In Mr. Jefferson's reply, dated the following day, he says: "*Dear Sir:* I am very sorry the explanations attempted between Dr. Thornton and yourself on the manner of finishing the House of Representatives have not succeeded;" and the President then goes on to state what has been already quoted in regard to the selection of Dr. Thornton's plan.

A word here with regard to this plan, which is now before me. When the Oven was removed from the south wing, the architect had before him a rectangular area surrounded by walls that had been carried up as high as the basement story, and which corresponded externally with the north wing. Within this area, all that Thornton's plan showed were twenty-four little squares, with inscribed circles, representing the position of as many columns. On one of the three plans, which I have already spoken of, Dr. Thornton had drawn lines, to signify the divisions into rooms of the space between the external walls.

Of this plan, Mr. Latrobe writes to the President on the 29th of March, 1804, after Dr. Thornton had refused to hear him:

"No. 1 is an exact copy of the plan proposed by Dr. Thornton for the arrangement of the ground floor into offices and committee-rooms.

"It is liable to these remarks: 1. The author has forgotten that the open space enclosed by the elliptical hall becomes a dark cellar, the hall of legislation being raised to the story above. 2. Therefore, the doors leading into it are useless, if not absurd. 3. None of the rooms can be furnished with fireplaces, excepting on the outer wall; and it is now too late to open them there, on account of the solidity of the stonework and the hardness of the material of which it is composed. 4. No staircase can be carried up behind the speaker's chair between the wall and the elliptical enclosure, for want of room."

Without pursuing Mr. Latrobe's objections further, his letter explains, among other things, how he proposes to obviate the difficulty caused by the elliptical form of the chamber, by substituting two semicircles abutting on a parallelogram; and referring then to Dr. Thornton's plan,—where spacious stairs were shown leading only to a gallery and to a room fifty feet square, with but one window, and that in a corner,—says, "I have taken the liberty to alter the whole of this part of the plan;" and then he proceeds to describe the construction, with a portion of which all are now familiar who have visited the south wing through the basement entrance. This letter is a long one, and explains in detail the design that it was proposed to follow. Another, and longer letter, dated April 29th, describes, in still more detail, Mr. Latrobe's plan, which thus became an original one, as regarded the interior arrangements of this part of the Capitol; and which, having been approved by the President, was subsequently carried out. Of this, the corridors and committee-rooms, the stairs and the lobby with its pannelled dome,—all of which defied the flames when the Capitol was burned by the British in 1814,—still remain.

It was only natural that Dr. Thornton should have been dissatisfied with criticism like the foregoing, which was the substance of Mr. Latrobe's replies to questions proposed to him by

a committee of the House of Representatives; and the letter of the 29th of April concludes as follows: "I have lately received a letter from Dr. Thornton on the subject of the answers which I gave to the committee of the House of Representatives. In these answers I expressed as much as possible the truth as regarded the original plan, and thought I had spoken of it with delicacy. The letter to me is, among those who admire the fashion, an unequivocal challenge to the field."

Mr. Latrobe's plan of the south wing, as described in these letters, having, as already said, been approved, there was no further reference to Dr. Thornton. No sooner, however, had work there been begun, than it was found that the entire wing, including the exterior wall even, had to be taken down to the foundation, owing to the defective character of the materials and workmanship. In this portion of the Capitol, therefore, Mr. Latrobe had a *tabula rasa*, with the single exception of the exterior, which had to conform to that of the north wing, which was already under roof and occupied.

In the address, already more than once referred to, Mr. Latrobe is said "to have accepted and availed himself of Hatfield's services in the prosecution of the work." I hardly think that this could have been so. When Mr. Latrobe was appointed "Surveyor of the public buildings," he was engaged as engineer in constructing the original plan of the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal, and resided, sometimes in Wilmington and sometimes in New Castle,—paying occasional visits only to Washington—until the work on the canal ceasing, for want of funds, in 1808, he removed to Washington with his family. During his absence, the clerk of the works, Mr. John Lenthall, executed the singularly minute instructions which, in letters and drawings in detail, he received from Mr. Latrobe. The entire correspondence and many of the drawings are in my possession. They left nothing to be done but to obey them. In all this time, from 1803 to 1808, I find but a single letter to Mr. Hatfield, which I quote, for the double purpose of correcting a mistake and showing the opinion entertained of Mr. Hatfield by his successor:

"*Mr. George Hatfield:* NEW CASTLE, *April* 28, 1804.

"DEAR SIR.—By mistake I carried the enclosed letter to New Castle. You have conferred a favor upon me by its com-

municatian, which is the more important, as I am now at open war with Dr. Thornton. * * * If you could go over your drawings and ascertain what is his * * in the plan now said to be the original plan, I should be infinitely obliged to you. The contest which must now inevitably ensue is highly disagreeable; but I shall enter on it without reluctance if, in any respect, it can lead to the removal of that load of calumny with which you have been treated. My opinion of you can be of little consequence, while you possess such talents, taste and knowledge as are more easily admired than imitated. All that is necessary to be done is to expose the truth."

Had Hatfield's services been "accepted and availed of," Lenthall would not have been the only person to whom letters in regard to the plan or construction of the building would have been addressed.

One might reasonably suppose that, having held his ground against Dr. Thornton, and escaped the fate, so far, of Hallet and Hatfield, all would have been plain sailing with the architect. But the President was now to be contended with. Mr. Jefferson had studied architecture while in Paris as minister of the United States to France. Never interfering with Mr. Latrobe in the practical parts of his profession, he nevertheless had notions of his own; and the voluminous correspondence that the letter-books contain shows the cases in which he sat in judgment, in matters of taste, when the Capitol was under construction during his presidency.

As already said, Mr. Latrobe had substituted two semicircles abutting on a parallelogram for Dr. Thornton's ellipsis; the whole covered by a flat dome—the centre of which was necessarily cylindrical,—supported by a colonnade of twenty-four columns standing on a wall, some seven feet above the floor of the hall, beyond which were the galleries and lobbies. For reasons of economy, as well as taste, Mr. Latrobe preferred that these columns should be after the model furnished by the Clepsydra at Athens, or by the Doric order as exhibited in the Theatre of Marcellus at Rome: and among the drawings in the portfolios are two admirable sections, colored and shaded—one north and south, the other east and west—showing the æsthetic effect of each design. In the letter which accompanied these drawings

is the earliest suggestion, of which I am aware, of the employment of iron in architectural decoration. "The bells of the capitals," says the writer, referring to the Clepsydra, "may be easily cast in one piece of iron, with the upper row of plain leaves; the other may be cast separately and fixed with copper rivets." Mr. Jefferson, however, insisted upon the columns of the Choragic Monument of Lysicrates. This was the more remarkable, inasmuch as Mr. Jefferson had suggested in one of his letters, "whether it would not be well to make the internal columns of well burnt brick, moulded in portions of circles adapted to the diminution of the columns;" adding: "I know of an instance of a range of six or eight columns in Virginia twenty feet high, well proportioned and properly diminished, executed by a common bricklayer. The bases and capitals would, of course, be of hewn stone. I suggest this for your consideration, and tender you friendly salutations."* On another occasion, Mr. Latrobe had provided a lantern above a central opening in the arched ceiling of the hall, observing that it would afford a diffused light; while Mr. Jefferson insisted that the alternate panels in the alternate rows of panels into which the ceiling was divided, should be of plate glass. It was in vain that the architect spoke of the objectionable cross lights from a hundred openings; of the condensation of moisture on the plate glass dripping on the heads of the members seated at their desks below; of the inevitable leakage where the exterior of the ceiling was the roof of the hall, and exposed to the weather; of the effect of the sun's rays scattered through the chamber: Mr. Jefferson was pertinaceous and peremptory; and having been obliged to yield to the President in the matter, and make the best of his plan, there is in one of Mr. Latrobe's letters a marginal sketch of an arrangement of blinds, operated from the interior, to obviate the last-named difficulty. That the ceiling thus perforated, and when admirably painted by George Bridport, at the head of the decorative painters of the day, was picturesquely effective was admitted; but it was found in practice to be open to the objections that had been urged against it.

It is proper to add, in regard to Mr. Jefferson's interference in the construction of the Capitol, that, with the above exceptions, what he said in this connection was, in the main, sugges-

*Jefferson's Correspondence, vol. iv, p. 535.

tive—not mandatory. In a letter to the Secretary of the Navy, written in 1811, to be found in the appendix to Dunlap's "History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in America," Mr. Latrobe refers to Mr. Jefferson's "positive orders that I should introduce Corinthian columns into the House of Representatives, and put one hundred lights of plate glass into the ceiling, contrary to my declared judgment and earnest entreaties and representations. In other respects, however, the honor which the friendship of that great man has done me obliterates all feeling of dissatisfaction on account of those errors of a vitiated taste and an imperfect attention to the practical effect of his architectural projects."

In the January number of *Harper's Magazine* for 1869, there is the following paragraph, which it is proper to notice in this connection: "It is within the old Capitol that some of our earlier statesmen rivaled one another in the decorative arts. Jefferson evinced a good deal of architectural taste and capability in pillars varied after the likeness of sheaves of our ancient maize, the ears and blades and silk forming the capital, the clustered, jointed stems bound together for the shaft; and in designs where the blossoms and foliation of the tobacco plant make an effect as exquisite to the full as the old acanthus leaf;" and in a previous number of the same popular periodical, a writer, speaking of a visit to Monticello, says: "In the spacious and lofty hall only one object of the sculptor's art remains. It is a model in plaster of the capital composed by Jefferson for a new order of architecture—purely American—in which the column was to consist of maize or Indian corn stalks. The capital has the same general form and style of the Corinthian, but the ornaments are composed of the leaves and blossoms of the tobacco plant, regularly grouped, instead of the acanthus."*

These statements do great injustice; and the deserved popularity and general accuracy of the magazine give them a claim to consideration. The works of an Architect are his title deeds to a fame that is too often the only compensation he receives for the labors of a life-time. To take from him the credit that is his due is to rob him of what belongs to him. Although he may not have built Giotto's Tower, or Wren's Cathedral, he and

*Harper's Monthly Magazine of July, 1853.

those who come after him may take the same pride in his work, however comparatively insignificant, that the Florentine, or the Englishman did in theirs; and it becomes the duty of those to whom their reputation is an inheritance to vindicate it when occasion serves.

In the reconstruction of the north wing of the Capitol, Mr. Latrobe planned a vestibule in which are six columns with the capitals modelled from maize; and on the 28th of August, 1809, I find him writing the following letter to Mr. Jefferson, who was then at Monticello:

"DEAR SIR:—I have packed up and sent to Richmond, to be forwarded to Monticello, a box containing the model of the capital of the columns of the lower vestibule of the senatorial department of the north wing of the Capitol, which is composed of ears of maize, on a short frustrum, raising it about four feet from the ground. It may serve for a dial stand; and should you appropriate it to that use, I will forward to you a horizontal dial in Pennsylvania marble of the proper size. These capitals during the Summer session obtained me more applause from the members of Congress, than all the works of magnitude or difficulty that surround them. They christened them the 'corn-cob capitals,'—whether for the sake of alliteration I cannot tell, but certainly not very appropriately."

That Mr. Latrobe would have written such a letter to Mr. Jefferson, had the latter been the inventor or originator of the capital, is out of the question. In 1832, I saw it, not in plaster, but in the freestone of which the old Capitol is built. It was then in a sort of loggia that extended from the main building at Monticello.

A word now with respect to the tobacco plant capital. In the north wing is the oval area in which the main stairs were originally placed. These were not interfered with by Mr. Latrobe in 1805, and consisted of double flights from the basement to the Senate Chamber floor or story. The lower flights ascended in opposite directions to a common landing; from which other flights, at right angles, continued upwards to the corridor, on which doors opened from adjacent apartments.

When the Capitol was rebuilt after its destruction by the British, this oval of very massive brick work was permitted to remain from economical considerations; and in this way the incongruity of a circle, circumscribed by an ellipsis, came to pass. The stairs were, however, removed to the position they now occupy; and in their stead were substituted a circular arcade below, with a circular colonnade above. In this colonnade are the tobacco capitals, which were designed by Mr. Latrobe when rebuilding the north wing in 1816 or 1817. Mr. Madison was then the President, and Mr. Jefferson had for years ceased to have anything to do with the building. I recollect distinctly seeing the sculptors at work on the capitals in one of the rooms of the north wing which was used as a workshop for the time being. That my father always claimed them, and was proud of them, I know of my own knowledge; nor did I ever understand that they or the maize columns were attributed to Mr. Jefferson, until my attention was called, very recently, to the articles in the two numbers of *Harper*. Had my father remained longer in the employment of the Government, the general idea, originating in the corn-stalk column, would have been further elaborated, as it has been done by your distinguished President; and I have now in my possession full sized drawings of a capital whose ornamentation is derived from the cotton plant.

It is hardly necessary to point out the mistake of the writer of the second of the articles here alluded to, who places the tobacco capitals on the corn-stalk shafts—a combination of which neither Mr. Jefferson nor Mr. Latrobe would have had reason to be proud.*

"Our maize leaf is not less graceful in form than the lotus of Egypt, or the Acanthus of Greece, and the pillars in the lower vestibule of the Senate entrance to the Capitol, (their clustering shafts representing a bundle of reeds or stalks of Indian corn, and the capitals composed of the ear and leaf of the same plant,) must be regarded as a happy inspiration of Latrobe." "It is said they attracted the notice and commendation of Thomas Jefferson."—Quoted from "Hints on Public Architecture, by R. Dale Owen," 1849, pp. 9, 10, where the pillar and capital are engraved.

In the life of Fennell, by himself, 1814, p. 417, referring to the corn stalk columns, the author says: "Latrobe has set one noble example, why should it not be followed? We have here a sufficient number of indigenous trees, shrubs and flowers, from the emblems of which we might form an architectural system of our own. Can any nation be said to be more prolific in subjects of emblematic ornament than this? It is not only the corn stalk and its fruit: hundreds of native productions would, under the hands of an ingenious master, form emblematic columns, and encouragement to the strength of our country by adopting them.

I can still recall, among the shadowy impressions of my earliest boyhood, the effect, approaching awe, produced upon me by the old Hall of Representatives. I fancy I can see the heavy crimson drapery that hung in massive folds between the tall fluted Corinthian columns to within a short distance of their base; and I remember, or I think I remember, the low, gilded, iron railing that ran from base to base, and over which the spectators in the gallery looked down upon the members on the floor. I seem to see, even now, the speaker's chair, with its rich surroundings, and the great stone eagle which, with outspread wings, projected from the frieze, as though it were hovering over and protecting those who deliberated below. Of course, after so many years, it is not impossible that form and color have been given to the memories of a boy, nine years old at the time, by what he has since seen in the portfolios which were almost the picture-books of his childhood. Be this as it may, however, there can be no question that the old Hall of Representatives was a noble room. Even the British officer, who was ordered to destroy it, is reported to have said, as he stood at the entrance, "that it was a pity to burn anything so beautiful." In a letter from Mr. Jefferson to Mr. Latrobe, dated Monticello, April 14, 1811, he says: "I declared at many and all occasions, that I considered you the only person in the United States who could have executed the Representative chamber, or who could execute the middle building on any of the plans proposed;" and again, on the 12th of July, 1812, referring to a letter in which Mr. Latrobe had spoken of attacks upon him, Mr. Jefferson says: "With respect to yourself, the little disquietudes from individuals not chosen for their taste in works of art will be sunk in oblivion, while the Representative Chamber will remain a durable monument to your talents as an Architect."*

Turning now to the north wing. With the exception of the exterior freestone walls and the brick work surrounding the oval area in which were the principal stairs, this seems to have been mainly a wooden building. Columns, when introduced, as in the Senate Chamber, which was then on the basement floor, were posts, to which form was given by lath and plaster. Mr.

*Jefferson's Correspondence, vol. 5, p. 578.

Latrobe had but little to do with it, prior to 1805. In a letter to Mr. Jefferson, dated August 31, 1805, giving the details of a very careful examination, he expresses the opinion, in words more emphatic, it must be admitted, than elegant, though better suited perhaps, than any other to convey the idea, that "it must some day be completely gutted and solidly constructed in the interior." "The girders," he says, "that supported the joists of the ceiling on the west side, were being destroyed by dry rot. In the Senate Chamber, the plastering of the columns is so burst, as to gape from top to bottom from half an inch to an inch. The state of these columns is dangerous, and it is impossible to say to what extent a repair, by pulling off the lath and plaster, and repairing them might lead. I have directed a band of strong linen to be put around them, drawn together on the side next the gallery, so as not to be visible from below. When that is done, the cracks may be filled and the whole whitewashed, and the failure cannot be seen." From this it would appear, that these columns stood on a wall of some height above the floor of the Senate. "Another large patch," continues the writer, "has lately fallen from the ceiling on the right of the President's chair." From these extracts, the character of the whole construction may be inferred. In a later letter to the President, Mr. Latrobe says: "No one floor in the whole building could be considered safe. Scarcely a single girder or beam was entirely sound. The tenons of the oak joists were generally rotten, and the only species of timber that has withstood decay, was the pine and poplar, of which the beams and pillars were made. All the white oak was seized with dry rot; and even the beams of oak let into sound beams of pine were far advanced to decay. Almost all the plates and bond timbers which were partially buried in the walls, were in the interior reduced to powder; and, indeed, many of the pine posts on which lath and plaster columns were formed in the Senate Chamber were rotten. Upon the damaged parts of such timber, the brick piers of the Senate Chamber stood. Independently of the general rottenness of the timber, the frequent alterations, which the design has undergone in its original progress, had so weakened the work, and one of the heaviest walls had been so cut down in its lower part, that whenever the timber had given way the top must have fallen into the Senate Chamber."

I have extended these quotations, to account for the strong language of the Architect, in speaking of the necessity of a total reconstruction; as well as to explain how it was that when this exposure was made, all who had been connected with work of this description should, year after year, pursue the author with vituperation and abuse.

Nor was Mr. Latrobe alone in his criticism. One of the conditions of the appropriation bill of 1805, required the north wing to be carried up "in solid work specifically." This was done by Mr. Latrobe,—retaining only the *position* of the Senate Chamber and the stairs,—with the exception of a part on the west side, containing the library, which was designed by Mr. Latrobe, and rebuilt, partly of wood,—in a manner that, with this exception, defied the conflagration of 1814, and entitled him to the credit of being the Architect of the north as well as the south wing of the Capitol.

The materials from which much of the foregoing has been prepared, have been furnished by the letter-books and portfolios already mentioned. That I should have letter-books from a date that knew not press copy books or manifold writers, needs an explanation that might be put into a foot note, were it not connected with one who, if not an Architect, was an artist, a mechanician and a scientist, and in this way near of kin to the profession whose members are before me. I refer to Charles Wilson Peale. About the year 1802, he invented what he called "a polygraph," the essential parts of which were a light horizontal rod, with jointed sockets at each end, to hold common quill pens. This was connected with parallel motions; one traveling on the upper part of the inclined desk, while the other was suspended from a frame above it,—the two permitting the pen-rod to move the width and length of a sheet of paper. Two of such sheets were held flat by spring bars at their upper edges. The movement of the two pens being thus made identical, while the left hand one, held by the writer, wrote the letter, the right hand one wrote a duplicate original, which was placed in the desk drawer, until a sufficient number had accumulated to be bound and indexed. Of these originals, I have eighteen volumes, covering the period from 1803 to 1816 inclusive. Un-

fortunately, they form but one side of the correspondence, which embraces all conceivable subjects. In my father's frequent changes of residence, the other side has been lost. I do not know if there is a polygraph still in existence. If not, this notice will, at any rate, make a matter of record of a most ingenious contrivance, the invention of one whose name is inseparably connected with the history of art in America.*

In 1811, Congress ceased to make appropriations for completing the Capitol. The times were unpropitious. Circumstances that culminated in the war with Great Britain were maturing: and, satisfied with the corridor of rough boards that connected the two wings, Congress postponed for a season the erection of the central building. Among the drawings so often referred to, is one representing the east front of the Capitol, as intended by Mr. Latrobe to be completed. It was engraved by Ackerman in London, and is the same that was afterwards built, although the central dome is represented as a low one, proportionate to the domes on the wings. The huge affair that was substituted for it, is said to have been suggested, if not directed, by Mr. Adams, who was not without architectural pretensions. A prominent feature of Mr. Latrobe's design was the grand central portico projecting from the main floor of the building with the carriage way below, that now characterizes the old Capitol. Thornton's plan shows a shallow portico of eight columns on a level with the basement. To Mr. Adams also, is said to be due the pitch of the pediments, in which the rules of Corinthian architecture, illustrated in the pediments of the Extension,—were violated, to accommodate the allegorical figures on the tympanum.

Some idea may be formed of the surroundings of the Capitol, when Congress ceased its appropriations, from a letter to the Chairman of the House Committee on Public Buildings from Mr. Latrobe, dated February 8th, 1811, suggesting the

*In a letter to Mr. Jefferson, dated October 2, 1803, Mr. Latrobe speaking of the polygraph, says: "I am not yet entirely master of the motion, so as to write exactly the same hand which a single pen produces; but in an hour's practice I learned to write with the same ease and rapidity as with a common pen. I doubt not you have heard of the machine, and perhaps you possess one of them. What I have written on the other side is a specimen of the truth with which a copy is made."

importance of leveling an area of sixty feet wide in front for carriages, which he said ought to be a hundred feet wide, and carrying a permanent platform on the south wing as far as the gallery door on the south-east corner, and on the north to the north door, to facilitate entrance into the court room. Except for motives of economy, he would have advised, he continues, the extension of the platforms to the western angles of both wings. In the same letter, he says, that if there is anything left over from the appropriation asked for, it should be devoted to the repairs of the Pennsylvania Avenue.

The Pennsylvania Avenue, in those days, was little better than a common country road. On either side were two rows of Lombardy poplars, between which was a ditch often filled with stagnant water, with crossing places at intersecting streets. Outside of the poplars was a narrow footway, on which carriages often intruded to deposit their occupants at the brick pavements on which the few houses scattered along the avenue abutted. In dry weather, the avenue was all dust,—in wet weather, all mud; and along it "The Royal George"—an old-fashioned, long bodied four horse stage—either rattled with members of Congress from Georgetown in a halo of dust, or pitched, like a ship in a seaway, among the holes and ruts of this national highway.

The Capitol itself stood on the brink of a steep declivity, clothed with old oaks and seamed with numerous gullies. Between it and the Navy Yard, were a few buildings, scattered here and there over an arid common; and following the amphitheatre of hills from the south-east around to the heights of Georgetown—houses few and far between indicated the beginning of the present city. The Patent and Post Office, in one huge un-ornamental, barn-like brick edifice, occupied the place of their marble successors; and at the other end of the avenue, "The White House" had become a conspicuous object with the adjacent public offices. Still following the amphitheatre around, the eye caught a glimpse of Alexandria, and rested upon the broad expanse of water where the Eastern Branch joined the Potomac, with Greenleaf's Point between the two, on which the great tribe of the Shawnees once lit its council fires and had its fishing ground.

What this region is now, we all know; what it was then, there are still witnesses living who can tell.

Those who are familiar with the erection of public buildings to-day, can hardly appreciate the difficulties that beset, on all sides, the founders of Washington. Now, the telegraph will set men to work in the quarries of Maine or Tennessee, to furnish building materials in Washington, with the assurance of having them delivered in little more time than was required to send a letter and receive an answer in 1800.*

When appropriations ceased, the Architect's occupation was gone; and Mr. Latrobe had to look back upon eight years of struggle, mortification and abuse, which not even the exuberant praise of Mr. Jefferson, and the unflinching support of both Mr. Madison and Mr. Jefferson could compensate.

In a letter that he wrote, on the eve of leaving Washington, to Mr. William Jones, then Secretary of the Navy, Mr. Latrobe says: "When I was appointed surveyor of the public buildings of the United States, all the persons formerly employed had been dismissed. My system was totally in opposition to that formerly established. Every step I have taken for ten years past has been watched and reported, and the members of Congress have been besieged in detail with complaints of my arbitrary extravagance. The Federal papers have been filled with abuse of me; and yet these very men erected the north wing—a building half finished only—at the expense of $330,000, of lath and plaster and rotten wood internally, paying five and a half dollars for stone per ton and five to six dollars per thousand for bricks; while the south wing, in quantity and quality of materials of three times the value, vaulted throughout and sculptured and painted, stone costing from six to ten dollars per ton, bricks from seven to eight dollars per thousand, was built by me for $274,000." It may be admitted that it was not in ordinary human nature for these men to see quietly the exhibition of their incompetency which the process of substitution and reconstruction developed; and hence the abuse which was heaped upon the architect, in the hope that, as Hallet and Hatfield had been crushed, he would be crushed too. Unmoved

*In a circular addressed to members of Congress in 1806, Mr. Latrobe explains the delay in the execution of public work in Washington from the beginning. It is in itself an interesting history. I am not aware that there is more than a single copy in existence, which has been carefully preserved in the library of the Maryland Historical Society.

by it all, Mr. Latrobe, with the confidence of the two presidents under whom he served, resisted successfully to the end.

Architects were not regarded in the United States, socially, as a general rule, at the beginning of the century, as they are now. In a letter to Volney, dated July 11, 1811, Mr. Latrobe says: "Thinking only of the profession and of the affluence which it yields in Europe to all who follow it, you forget that I am an engineer in *America;* that I am neither a mechanic nor a merchant, nor a planter of cotton, rice or tobacco. You forget—for you know it as well as I do—that with us the labor of the hand has precedence over that of the mind; that an engineer is considered only as an overseer of men who dig, and an architect as one that watches others who hew stone or wood. But, in fact, the profession is becoming, by degrees, better known and respected." It may be added that, in this respect, things have, indeed, changed in eighty years.

Too brave to yield to mere opposition, however violent; too proud to conciliate by flattery to avert it; confident that his works would be his vindication, Mr. Latrobe's voluminous correspondence shows throughout, that he never lost sight of the dignity his profession required him to maintain; and as he loved it, so he fought for it, and, in the end, he won.

It would not be right to omit, in an account of the Old Capitol, several whose names are associated with it. Lenthall, the clerk of the works, a man of singular ability, I have already mentioned. Another was George Blagden, of the same type, who was in charge, after Hallet and Hatfield and Hoban left. Then there were Andrei and Giuseppe Franzoni, brought, at Mr. Jefferson's instance, from Italy in 1805—the first, a sculptor of architectural decoration, and the other of figures. Besides their own handiwork, they instructed others; and in one of Mr. Latrobe's letters he speaks of four Americans, taught by Andrei, engaged upon the Corinthian capitals of the Hall of Representatives.

It was Franzoni who modelled the cornstalk columns already referred to, and a statue of Liberty, which, with other of his works, was destroyed when the old Capitol was burnt. He was followed, in 1815, by his brother, Carlo Franzoni—a man of decided genius, great readiness, and a thoroughly educated

sculptor. He modelled the figure of History in her car, with which we are all familiar in the present Hall of Statues; also, figures of North and South Carolina, represented as sisters, the arm of one around the neck of the other; also, Massachusetts and Maine,—a mother leading her child—for Maine was as yet a district only. These were figures of the heroic size, a part of a series intended by Mr. Latrobe to have places in the building. Another work of Carlo Franzoni is the figure of Justice in bas-relief in the law library of the old north wing. Other sculptors followed these—Cousici, Capellano and more; but, with the old Capitol, the names of Andrei and the Franzonis are more especially connected.

After the burning of the Capitol, Mr. Latrobe was called from Pittsburg, where he had been engaged in introducing steamboats on the Western waters, to rebuild it, in 1815; and there is a letter from him to Mr. Jefferson describing the condition in which the flames had left it. After referring to the injury done to the various parts of the building, Mr. Latrobe says: "In the Hall of Representatives the devastation had been dreadful. There was here no want of materials for conflagration; for when the number of members of Congress was increased the old platform was left in its place and another raised over it, giving an additional quantity of dry and loose timber. All the stages and seats of the galleries were of timber and yellow pine. The mahogany desks, tables and chairs were in their places. At first, rockets were fired through the roof; but they did not set fire to it. They sent men on it, but it was covered with sheet iron. At last they made a great pile in the centre of the room of the furniture; and, retiring, set fire to a quantity of rocket stuff in the middle. The whole was soon in a blaze; and so intense was the flame, that the glass of the lights was melted, and I have now lumps weighing many pounds run into mass. The stone is, like most freestone, unable to resist the force of flame; and I believe no known material would have been able to resist so sudden and intense a heat. The exterior of the columns and entablature scaled off, and not a vestige of fluting or sculpture remained." The several blocks, out of which the columns had been made, yielding unequally to the fire, rested, the edge of one on an inner portion of another; and the won-

der was that such a skeleton continued to stand even for an hour. So fragile, and yet so massive, was it, that the laborers hesitated to venture within the spectral colonnade. Finally, by piling cordwood between the columns up to the entablature, it became safe to use the ordinary means for its removal.

It is not necessary to describe how the oblong hall of the old Capitol was changed into the semi-circle of the present hall of statues; or how the breccia columns took the place of the sandstone ones from Acquia Creek; or the other alterations with which you are all familiar. In 1817, Mr. Latrobe resigned as architect, and Mr. Charles Bulfinch, an architect of ability and skill, a refined and courteous gentleman, was appointed in his place, and carried out, with little change, Mr. Latrobe's design.

And so, the Capitol remained for years; and Dr. Thornton and Hallet and Hatfield and Hoban and Latrobe had passed away—their strifes forgotten, and their names even sounding strange to the new generations that were treading on their graves—until the growth of the nation, the increasing number of its representatives, a greater refinement and a larger luxury, and, especially, the conviction that Washington was now and forever to be the permanent seat of the government of the United States, required the Capitol to be extended. Of how this has been done by Thomas U. Walter, I can scarcely speak in his presence as I would like to speak, could I find words to do justice to the last architect of the vast pile that now looks down upon the Federal city. The pupil of Strickland, as Strickland was the pupil of my father, it has been with me a pleasing fancy for more than a quarter of a century, to believe, that there was, in some faint way, a law of of descent, applicable under the circumstances, which connected the architect who clothed Thornton's skeleton with sinew and muscle and beauty, until the whole creature became his own, with his brilliant, refined and accomplished successor, who, at the head of a profession, socially, to-day, without a superior, has absorbed all that has been done before in what is now the Capitol—who, making the magnificent dome, on whose iron sheets the hammer never ceased to ring during the war that threatened to make the whole structure worthless—the controlling feature of the design, has screened

with it all the exterior littlenesses of a "vitiated taste," and made even the incongruities of the Italian renaissance subserve the purposes of genius.* Nor can I close an address, whose length I know must have taxed your patience, better than by quoting from the corner-stone of the Capitol extension the grand words that Webster placed there.

"If, therefore," thus ends the inscription, "it shall hereafter be the will of God that this structure shall fall from its base, that its foundation be upturned and this stone be brought to light, BE IT KNOWN, that on this day the Union of the United States of America stands firm; that the Constitution still exists unimpaired, and with all its original usefulness and glory, growing every day stronger and stronger in the great body of the American people, and attracting more and more the admiration of the world. All here assembled, whether belonging to public life or to private life, with hearts devoutly thankful to Almighty God for the preservation of the liberty and happiness of the country, unite in sincere and fervent prayers that this deposit, and the walls and arches, the domes and towers, the columns and entablatures now to be executed over it may endure forever. God save the United States of America."

* Edward Clarke, Esq., the Architect in charge of the Capitol, is a pupil of Mr. Walter, thus continuing the fanciful law of descent referred to in the text.

DO NOT CIRCULATE

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